

2004

the year in horror

This year is shaping up to be the scariest on record, with a horror renaissance sweeping Hollywood, and more fright films being produced in Europe, Asia and even in Australia. So, here's what to look out for in 2004...

Alone In The Dark

Director: Uwe Boll

Cast: Christian Slater, Tara Reid, Stephen Dorff

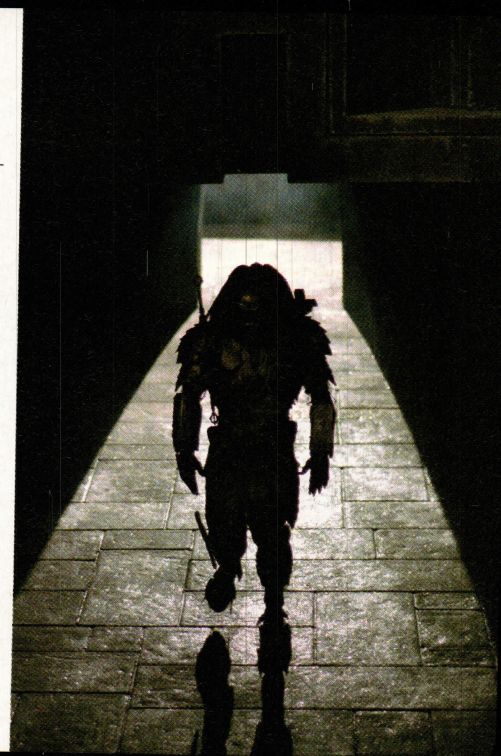
Based on the horror video game of the same name, this has Christian Slater as Ed Carnby, an investigator of the supernatural who battles ancient demons on Shadow Island. The \$US30m film was shot in Vancouver and was directed by Uwe Boll, who also made video game adaptation *House Of The Dead* (see separate entry).

Alien Vs Predator

Director: Paul W.S. Anderson

Cast: Sanaa Lathan, Lance Henriksen, Ewen Bremner.

Not since the old Universal days of *Frankenstein Meets The Wolf Man* and *House Of Frankenstein* have there been such monster mashes! New Line scored last year with *Freddy Vs Jason*. The showdown was made for \$US25m but banked \$US82m in US in cinemas, not including worldwide takings and DVD sales. Such success bodes well for *AVP*, which unites two of Fox's most profitable beasts for a deathmatch that was first hinted at in *Predator 2* when Danny Glover's character found an alien head inside a predator's spaceship. *AVP*'s plot has three teen-aged predators dropped off on Earth to hunt aliens as part of initiation rituals conducted every 5000 years. If it's half as scary as the video game, we're in for a thrill ride. Horror journeyman Paul W.S. Anderson (*Resident Evil*, *Event Horizon*) is at the helm and the very punky Sanaa Lathan (*Out Of Time*) stars. *Alien Vs Predator* is due for Australian release on September 16.





Hellboy

Director: Guillermo del Toro
Cast: Ron Perlman, Selma Blair

Having already directed *The Devil's Backbone* and *Cronos* accords Guillermo Del Toro the rank of horrormeister. But he doesn't just do artistic creepfests, as *Mimic* and *Blade II* attest. The combination of his talents make him a great choice to helm *Hellboy* – an adaptation of the comic book about a demon raised by the Nazis who goes on to help defend mankind against supernatural nasties. Expect plenty of bone-crunching moments and ho-ho wisecracking from Ron Perlman in the title role. It's Perlman's second Del Toro outing after *Blade II*. Meanwhile, the enchanting Selma Blair plays a firestarter who killed her whole family – and town – when she was aged 11. Like Hellboy, she's recruited by the government to "give evil hell". The talented Blair previously dabbled in the genre as a voice on the phone in *Scream 2*. *Hellboy* opens here on April 8.

Creep

Director: Christopher Smith
Cast: Franka Potente

Keep running, Lola. Franka Potente plays Kate, a chick trapped in a London tube station. Of course, she encounters something much scarier than hobo piss. This seems a reimagining of the 1970s Brit cannibal classic *Raw Meat*.

Riding The Bullet

Director: Mick Garris
Cast: Jonathan Jackson, Erika Christensen

Based on a Stephen King novella and adapted by King expert Garris (TV's *The Stand* and *The Shining*, *Sleepwalkers*), this has a hitch-hiker being picked up by a very odd driver. As the ride progresses our hitcher discovers some disturbing secrets about the man behind the wheel.

Godsend

Director: Nick Hamm
Cast: Greg Kinnear, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos

Think of this as *Pet Semetary* using DNA instead of West African juju. A couple lose their beloved son but with the help of rogue stem-cell scientist Robert De Niro they rebirth their boy. Will he be a happy little Vegemite who'll grow up to star in *Clone Home Alone*? Not likely. The trailer looks creepy.



Salem's Lot

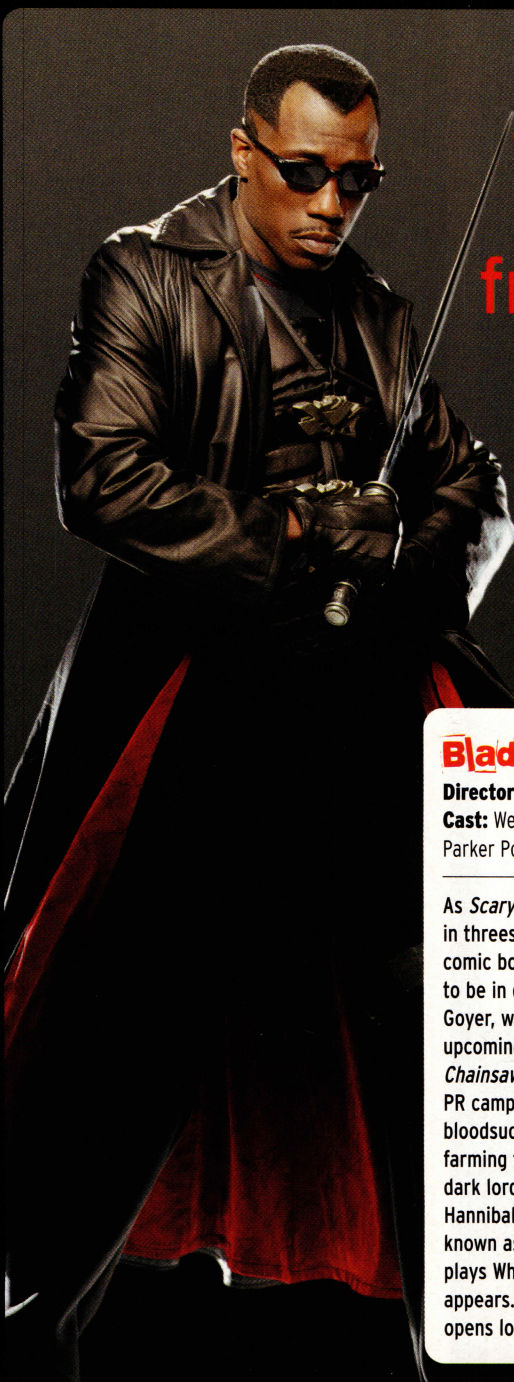
Director: Mikael Salomon
Cast: Rob Lowe, Rebecca Gibney, Brendan Cowell

Strictly speaking, this is a TV mini-series but word is that this Stephen King adaptation – filmed in Victoria last year – is ultra-faithful to the source. That means it's shaping up to be scarier than the David Soul version, which was spine-tingling anyway. Plus, it'll be nice to see Aussies get munched.



Stand by
for crimson
arterial
frenzy come
September.

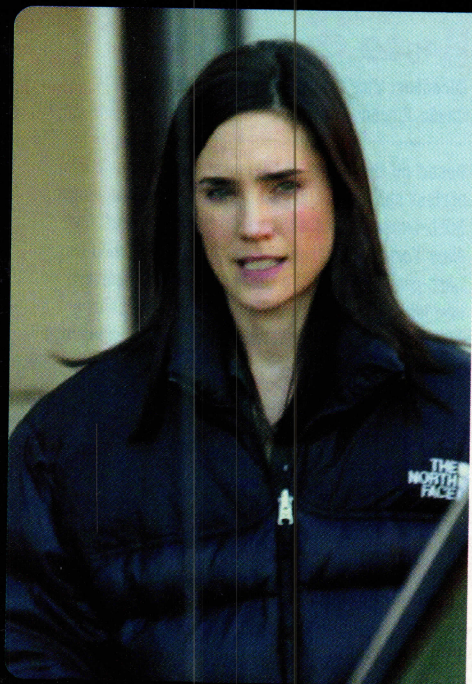
BLADE: TRINITY



Blade: Trinity

Director: David Goyer
Cast: Wesley Snipes, Kris Kristofferson, Jessica Biel, Parker Posey

As *Scary Movie 3* reminded us, "Good trilogies come in threes." So it is that our half-human, half-vampire comic book hero returns. The franchise would look to be in good hands with writer-director David Goyer, who penned the first two *Blade* flicks and the upcoming Chris Nolan-directed *Batman* movie. *Texas Chainsaw* babe Trinity sees the vampires waging a PR campaign to turn humanity against Blade. The bloodsuckers get politicians on their side and start farming the crimson to prepare the way for their dark lord – Dracula! But Blade has a new ally in Hannibal King – played by Ryan Reynolds, formerly known as Van Wilder: Party Liaison. Jessica Biel plays Whistler's daughter, while Parker Posey also appears. The arterial frenzy begins when *Trinity* opens locally on September 30.



Dark Water

Director: Walter Salles

Cast: Jennifer Connelly

Based on the 2002 Japanese film of the same name by *Ringu* director Hideo Nakata, this is the tale of a mother and daughter who escape a custody battle by hiding out in an abandoned building... that turns out to be haunted by the ghost of a former tenant. Proving that horror no longer is a grubby little genre, this film has stellar talents attached. Walter Salles, acclaimed for *Central Station* and the man behind the hotly anticipated Che Guevara biopic *The Motorcycle Diaries*, is directing Oscar winner Jennifer Connelly and Oscar nominees John C. Reilly, Tim Roth and Pete Postlethwaite. With that sort of cast, we might even see horror get a look-in at the Academy Awards come 2005. Don't laugh - it has happened. *The Silence Of The Lambs* became the second film to ever sweep all five major categories back in 1991. Look for *Dark Water* in cinemas late this year.

The Woods

Director: Lucky McKee

Cast: Agnes Bruckner, Patricia Clarkson

Lucky McKee's debut *May* (out now on DVD) is a gem of a psychological horror with a vein of dark humour. His second flick, set in 1965, is about the strange goings on in the woods near a girls school. Agnes Bruckner was ace in *Blue Car*, Clarkson's Oscar worthy and Bruce Campbell cameos. Bring it on!



The Exorcist: The Beginning

Director: Renny Harlin

Cast: Stellan Skarsgård

Like *Cursed*, this is a troubled production. The film - featuring Father Merrin's first encounter with evil in Africa in the 1940s - was announced in July 2001. John Frankenheimer was attached to direct but he died before filming could begin. Paul Schrader stepped up and the cameras rolled in Morocco in November 2002. In August last year, Schrader handed his cut of the film - a moody examination of faith - to Morgan Creek, the production company. They freaked and refused to give him post-production money. A month later, Schrader was fired and action helmer Renny Harlin was given \$US8m and six weeks to reshoot a substantially revised script with an emphasis on *The Exorcist* mythology - and, presumably, gore. Reports are that up to 90 per cent of the movie was reshot.



Boogeyman

Director: Stephen Kay

Cast: Barry Watson, Emily Deschanel

The first fright flick from Sam Raimi's genre production company Ghost House has a man returning home to face the nightmares of childhood. *Empire* takes you on the New Zealand set in an upcoming issue.

The Amityville Horror

Director: Unknown

Cast: Unknown

The 1979 film based on the book based on the hoax was a sequel-spawning hit. Although details are still sketchy, a remake has seemingly been green-lit, written by Daniel Farrands (*Halloween 6*) and produced by Michael Bay (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) for MGM.

Halloween Nine

Director: Rick Rosenthal

This has a cast of Oscar winners Tom Hanks, Halle Berry and Sir Ian McKellen. The script is by David Mamet, while Aussie John Seale will contribute his widescreen compositions. Hans Zimmer is set to rework John Carpenter's scary theme. Nah, just kidding. The only thing we know about this is that a website competition winner got to be an extra.

Ginger Snaps: Unleashed

Director: Brett Sullivan

Cast: Katherine Isabelle, Emily Perkins

Ginger Snaps was one of the most original and exciting horror flicks of the past few years. The story of two teen-aged sisters, both outcasts, who are on the verge of womanhood when a werewolf comes to town, it's available through Magna Pacific on DVD. If you haven't seen it, get yourself a copy. The sequel, meanwhile, would seem to have maintained the standard of the original, if initial Canadian reviews are to be believed. The original actresses return to their roles. This time Brigitte is trying to prevent the "turn" by injecting monksblood but she ends up trapped in rehab after being busted by the cops who think she's using drugs. Denied the preventative, it's only a matter of time before she goes on the tear. But a male werewolf is also stalking her, wanting Brigitte as a mate. Meanwhile, Ginger also makes her presence felt...





Open Water

Director: Chris Kentis
Cast: Blanchard Ryan, Daniel Travis

A few years ago two American scuba divers disappeared off the North Queensland coast when their tour boat headed for shore without them. What happened to them is unknown. But this low-budget effort fills in events for us. Very toothy events. *Variety* heralded Chris Kentis's film as "a *tour de force* thriller... highly effective and chillingly creepy". Essentially *Open Water* is two people in the sea, trying to signal passing boats, becoming dehydrated, blaming each other for their predicament and being stalked by sharks growing ever bolder... Filmed in a *vérité* style - Kentis dropped two actors in open ocean and threw in chum to attract real sharks - no CG here, folks - this movie was picked up by the ever-canny Lions Gate Entertainment. It will benefit from a campaign that positions it as a hybrid of *Jaws* and *The Blair Witch Project*. We reckon it'll be a hit.

House Of The Dead

Director: Uwe Boll
Cast: Jürgen Prochnow

Based on the game of the same name, this zombiefest sank in the US last year. It's ranked as the 30th-worst film of all time on the IMDb and *The New York Post's* Lou Lumenick wrote: "You'd be hard-pressed to find a duller, more incompetent - and less scary - flick with cheesier effects in a remainder bin crammed with direct-to-video horrors."



Love Object

Director: Melissa Sagemiller, Desmond Harrington
Cast: Desmond Harrington, Melissa Sagemiller

Nerd Ken finds a sex doll that look like Lisa, the co-worker he's in love with. He buys one, falls in love with it, argues with it, and fucks it - a lot. And then the real Lisa falls for him, pissing Fake Lisa right off. The date movie of 2004.

Resident Evil: Apocalypse

Director: Alexander Witt
Cast: Milla Jovovich

You just can't keep good zombies down, nor a good heroine. After escaping from the lab, Milla Jovovich's Alice wakes up with other survivors in the middle of Raccoon City - a necropolis of the living dead! Opens September in the US.



Janghwa Hongryeon - A Tale Of Two Sisters

Director: Ji Woon Kim
Cast: Su-jeong Lim, Geun-yeong Mun

Two rich sisters are discharged from a mental institution and go to live with their nutty step-mother. The girls have to contend with ghosts, nightmares and bloody apparitions. DreamWorks is said to be remaking this Korean horror thriller.



Cursed

Director: Wes Craven
Cast: Christina Ricci, Shannon Elizabeth, Portia de Rossi, Mandy Moore

Hot chicks do horror! Wes Craven does werewolves! Lycanthropes take Los Angeles! It sounds great on paper - especially with Kevin Williamson (*Scream*) providing the words - but the title of this flick has sadly proved all too accurate, with the movie plagued by disasters. Last June, Dimension shut the film down, demanding rewrites. Then, according to Wes Craven, fx make-up guru Rick Baker quit the project, deciding to retire from the biz altogether. Doubt remained as to whether Craven could reunite the cast for the extensive reshoots that were deemed necessary. But happily, the curse of *Cursed* seems to have lifted. "We're essentially reshooting the whole movie," Christina Ricci said in an interview just before Christmas. "And this time it's a lot more fun. We have a lot more action and it seems better." In a word: sweeeeeeet!



Haute Tension

Director: Alexandre Aja
Cast: Cécile De France

This French horror has a serial killer disturbing a family's peace at their rural retreat. Those who've seen the flick at festivals are raving about it, saying it's the first horror masterpiece of the 21st century and a worthy companion piece to *Halloween*.



Lost Things

Director: Martin Murphy
Cast: Steve Le Marquand, Leon Ford

Scripted by local playwright Stephen Sewell (*The Boys*), this Aussie chiller has four surfers meeting a strange dude, with murder and mayhem ensuing. Interesting for its cerebral approach, with some mind-bending stuff, rather than just slash 'n' hack. Release date uncertain.

Dead End

Directors: Jean-Baptiste Andrea and Fabrice Canepa
Cast: Ray Wise, Alexandra Holden

It's Christmas Eve and Frank is driving his family to his in-laws. For the first time in 20 years, he takes a short cut. Silly Frank. Things go wrong. Real wrong. *Dead End* has a nasty, funky trailer with a teen-devouring baby in a pram!

Hide And Seek

Director: John Polson
Cast: Robert De Niro, Famke Janssen

Since scoring a minor hit with *Swimfan* two years ago, "Our" John has graduated to directing Bobby D, über-babe Famke and child *du jour* Dakota Fanning in a nail-biter about a kid who deals with the death of her mum by inventing an imaginary friend... who then turns out to be nasty.

Shaun Of The Dead

Director: Edgar Wright
Cast: Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Bill Nighy, Lucy Davis

The team behind Britcom *Spaced* now bring us horror-comedy *Shaun Of The Dead*. As *Spaced* celebrated *Resident Evil* and Pegg's favourite film is *Dawn Of The Dead*, it's hard to think of anybody better equipped to celebrate the genre. Add Davis from *The Office* and *Love Actually's* Nighy and you have this year's horror dark horse.



The Village

Director: M. Night Shyamalan
Cast: Joaquin Phoenix, William Hurt

Scheduled for release here in September, this is M. Night Shyamalan's second attempt (after *Signs*) at farmyard frights. This time we're in a 19th-century Pennsylvanian village that has long since lived in peace with the creatures that live in the woods. But "the truce is ending" so one plucky resident has to venture into the trees.



"A romp from the director of *The Mummy*."

VAN HELSING

Van Helsing

Director: Stephen Sommers
Cast: Hugh Jackman, Kate Beckinsale, Richard Roxburgh, David Wenham

Van Helsing stakes its claim in cinemas in May. From what we've seen so far, this is a romp and a half. Would you expect anything less from the director of *The Mummy* movies? Here he again taps a host of Universal lore, incorporating Frankenstein's monster and Dracula. As thick on the ground are the Aussies - just tally up the talent doing genre!

The Brothers Grimm

Director: Terry Gilliam
Cast: Matt Damon, Heath Ledger, Lena Headey

To say that hopes are high for Terry Gilliam's first film in six years is a gross understatement. More famous recently for the movies he hasn't made, Gilliam here is on the fantastical end of the horror film scale. That's not to say that his titular characters aren't among the genre's true pioneers - after all, their fairy tales fuck with young minds long before kids slip their first slasher DVD into the player. The \$US80m film was shot in Prague and other Czech Republic locations last year. Co-written by Ehren Kruger (*The Ring*), this has brothers Jake and Will shopping their "exorcism" talents to gullible villages. Naturally, they hit a snag and have to find true courage when they encounter real supernatural nasties. Think *The Frighteners*, but with windmills.

Secret Window

Director: David Koepp
Cast: Johnny Depp, Maria Bello, John Turturro

David Koepp wrote *Spider-Man*, *Panic Room* and *Stir Of Echoes*. Now he's directing an adaptation of Stephen King's chiller about an author stalked by a nutter who claims to have been plagiarised. Johnny Depp and Maria Bello are at the peak of their powers, Turturro's always good, and we're psyched to see *Window* when it opens here in April.

